



MORE ABOUT ME



JOHN DRINKWATER

POEMS FOR A CHILD



MORE ABOUT ME

By John Drinkwater

JOHN DRINKWATER is primarily distinguished as a playwright and a writer of serious verse.

In this little volume — a companion to 'All About Me,' which appeared two years ago — he has done a book of verse for children and their parents; one 'full of whimsical philosophy, rich in humor — candidly written from a child's viewpoint.'

H. M. Brock's lavish and appropriate illustrations add greatly to the beauty and charm of the book.

MORE ABOUT ME



JOHN DRINKWATER

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Poems for a Child
by
JOHN DRINKWATER



Decorated with Illustrations by
H·M·BROCK



Boston and New York
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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I
EVERY DAY



A black and white line drawing of a woman in a headscarf and a textured coat standing with her back to the viewer, looking towards a group of four children. The children are playing on a playground structure that includes a slide and a climbing frame. One child is on the slide, another is climbing, and two others are standing nearby. The scene is set outdoors on a grassy area.

Mummy buys the dinner,
Daddy pays the rent,
And I can spend my penny
To heart's content.

One pound one and one-pence
It comes to altogether,
Which is quite enough for
All kinds of weather.





MULTIPLICATION

“ Multiplication is vexation,”
That is a thing they said,
And from twice times then to ten times ten
It bothers me in my head.

I can do quite well if I’m told to tell
The whole of a Table through,
But dodging about quite puts me out
Till I don’t know what to do.

When seven times five are thirty-five
I can tell you seven times six,
But seven times eight must kindly wait,
Or get me into a mix.

And yes, if you please, in the middle of threes
They asked me eleven elevens,
And that is the kind that makes my mind
All at sixes and sevens.



WASHING

What is all this washing about,
Every day, week in, week out ?
From getting up till going to bed,
I'm tired of hearing the same thing said.
Whether I'm dirty or whether I'm not,
Whether the water is cold or hot,
Whether I like or whether I don't,
Whether I will or whether I won't,—
“ Have you washed your hands, and washed your
face ? ”

I seem to *live* in the washing-place.

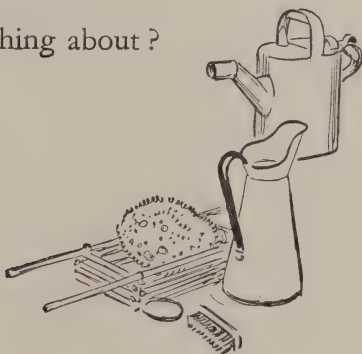




Whenever I go for a walk or ride,
As soon as I put my nose inside
The door again, there's some one there
With a sponge and soap, and a lot they care
If I have something better to do,
"Now wash your face and your fingers too."

Before a meal is ever begun,
And after ever a meal is done,
It's time to turn on the waterspout.

Please, what *is* all this washing about?



AGES

I'm eight,
Tommy's ten ;
But when
It comes to grown up men,
Or ladies, then
I hesitate.



Granpa says he's a hundred and ninety, and so
I suppose he ought to know,
Although
He still walks about very well,
And the other night when he was lost
We found him on the roof seeing whether the
tank was frozen in the frost ;
You never can tell.

Mummy says she is eighty-two,
But I know that can't be true,
Because to look at her I should say that twenty
Was plenty,
Or, at any rate,
Twenty-seven or eight.



Big Boy, who is a friend of mine
Says he is ninety-nine ;
Yet when he is happy, any day,
He dances about in a most curious way,
And runs about after a ball,
Which doesn't look at all
As old as that ;
And you should see his eyes
If it's pancakes or mince-pies.
And he sings flat,
But in a great strong voice that's fine ;
I don't believe he's ninety-nine.



I heard them say at lunch that Aunt Jemima
 Was an old-timer ;
 So I asked her after whether that was right,
 Which she said was not polite.
 She ought to have understood
 I didn't mean to be rude.

Anyway, why all this chatter?—
 Younger or older,
 What does it matter ?
 That's what I told her.
 Nobody's to blame ;
 I can't help being eight,
 And if I wait
 I shall be a hundred just the same
 As you or any one ;
 And I expect I'll find
 It's fun,
 Like it is now, so I don't mind.





ON BEING BOTTOM OF THE CLASS

It's this way, you see,—
No one wants to be
Bottom of the class, any more than me.

So, when I'm there,
Although I don't declare,
Exactly, in so many words, that I don't care,

I put it this way
To myself, and say—
Well, if they want to make a fuss, they may ;

I suppose
Every one knows
That nobody would be bottom if they chose ;

And in any case,
What's the disgrace,
Since somebody has to take the bottom place ?

And my advice,
At any price,
Is to let it be at least somebody nice.





IN A PRAM

I saw a baby in a pram,
Who was much smaller than I am,
Yet eight or seven years ago
I understand that I was so.

And very soon they say that he
Will be at least as big as me,
And then we both shall know a few
More other babies that are new.





'BUSES

Fifth Avenue 'buses,
And Piccadilly 'buses
Make a good deal of fusses
As they go along ;

But—

'A nickle to pay, sir,
'A penny to pay, sir,
'To go all the way, sir,
That never goes wrong.'





JIG-SAW

I walk straight on, and walk straight on,
Till half of London Town is gone,
Then turning back I change my mind,
And leave the other half behind.

I often go with More or Less
To gather time and water-cress,
Or privately with Now and 'Then
I talk about the ways of men.

But most of all I like to be
Alone with Nobody but Me,
Unless it happens You can spare
An hour or two from Here and There.





GOING TO SLEEP

In bed when I am after dark
Like not I naughty dogs that bark,
Nor in the window moths that come,
Nor of my supper left a crumb ;
But be if must I all alone
Things I to think have of my own,
Until the words I use about
To think of them go inside out.





TWOS

Why are lots of things in twos ?
 Hands on clocks, and gloves, and shoes,
 Scissor-blades, and water-taps,
 Collar studs, and luggage straps,
 Walnut shells, and pigeons' eggs,
 Arms and eyes and ears and legs—
 Will you kindly tell me who's
 So fond of making things in twos ?



II

MOSTLY CREATURES



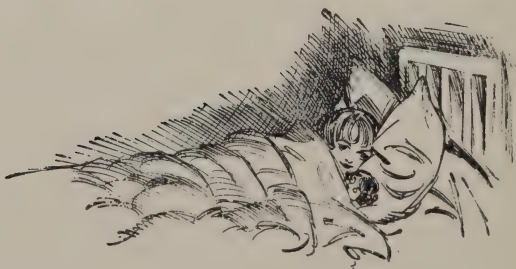


CHANGES

In summer it is leaves and sun,
And little brooks that hardly run,
The water is so low ;
In summer it is window-wide
On flowers that in the night outside
Are sleeping as they grow.



In winter it is wind and flood,
And brooks that break in angry mood,
That then were still and small ;
In winter it is hide-the-head,
And only peep to see from bed
The firelight on the wall.





THE BIRD AND THE APPLE-TREE

Bright bird on wing,
Come down and sing
Upon our apple-tree :
The buds are now
Upon the bough
For any bird to see.



In the wide sky
Why do you fly
 So fast, my bird, so far?
No apple-flowers
Fresher than ours
 In other gardens are.

But no, but no—
He would but go,
 That bright, that passing bird,
Heeding of me
And our apple-tree
 No word at all, no word.





ANIMALS EATING

The horses and the cows and sheep,
Except the time when they're asleep,
They eat, and never seem to stop,
But crop and crop and crop and crop.

Across a million million miles
A million million animiles
Must go on eating, as they pass,
A million million tons of grass.

They drift about the fields as though
They weren't particular to go
This way or that, but every way
They go on eating all the day.



Morning, afternoon, and night
There's always yet another bite
Before the last, and yet it seems
They never have unpleasant dreams.

So I suppose it isn't greed,
But only what they really need,
Though I should think sometimes they must
Be very nearly fit to bust.



TOM-TIT

I know a Tom-tit,
Swinging on a cocoa-nut,
Swinging on a cocoa-nut that swings upon a tree.
Eating of his breakfast,
Pecking at a cocoa-nut,
Upside-down or anyhow, and busy as a bee.





He's blue and yellow,
Like a little harlequin,
Spick and span, a tit-mouse most elegant to see ;
Outside the window,
Swinging on a sycamore,
Busy with his cocoa-nut, he don't mind me.





SNAIL

Me. Snail upon the wall,
Have you got at all
Anything to tell
About your shell?

Snail. Only this, my child—
When the wind is wild,
Or when the sun is hot,
It's all I've got.





FROG

He was a frugal frog,
Lived in a ditch,
Didn't know sun and fog,
Which from which.

Swam a little, ate a little,
Of things that frogs *do* eat,
Now and then let a little
Down for things *to* eat.

Croaked without s's ;
Face like Puck's ;
Liked water-cresses :
Didn't like ducks.



Under a willow,
Frugal and lean,
Half of him yellow,
Half of him green ;

Feet like fans,
Frog all alone,
He's not any man's,
He's his own.





RICKYARD

I thought it was a million bees
That some one in the fields had found,
And then a million more than these
To make so musical a sound.

I heard the music come and go,
I stood and listened in my play,
A lovely murmur to and fro,
I heard it miles and miles away.



I ran across the fields to find
How many million bees were there,
I ran to see what busy kind
Of bees were clouding in the air.



By parsley-bank and willow-wood
I followed in the sunny morn,
Till suddenly before me stood
A jolly farmer threshing corn;



A farmer and his men who fed
A great machine with yellow wheat
In fork-loads from a rick that spread
A golden dust about their feet.

And a great wheel of mellow sound
Spun in the shadow of tall trees,
And there I knew that I had found
My musical and busy bees.



TIMES

Time tells his times with pleasant names,
That sweetly take the ear,
Midsummer Eve and Valentine,
May Morning and New Year,
And Harvest Home and Hunter's Moon,
Easter and Innocent,
And Michaelmas and Whitsuntide,
And Ladyday and Lent.



Saint Swithin and Saint George have days
You may remember by ;
Remember also Hallow E'en ;
Remember Poor Old Guy ;
And so my calendar of Time
Has pleasant names to hear,
Till Merry Christmas comes again,
Who comes but once a year.



TIPTOE NIGHT

Tiptoe Night comes down the lane,
All alone, without a word,
Taking for his own again
Every little flower and bird.

Not a footfall, not a sigh,
Not a ripple of the air,
Not a sound to reckon by,
Yet I know that he is there.

And I count them as I wait,
Step by tiptoe step, until—
Hush! he's at the garden-gate,
Hush! he's at the window-sill.



THINGS OF GLEE

What things of glee
I can behold ;
Sweet whispering May,

The Milky Way,
The lambs in fold,
The budding tree.

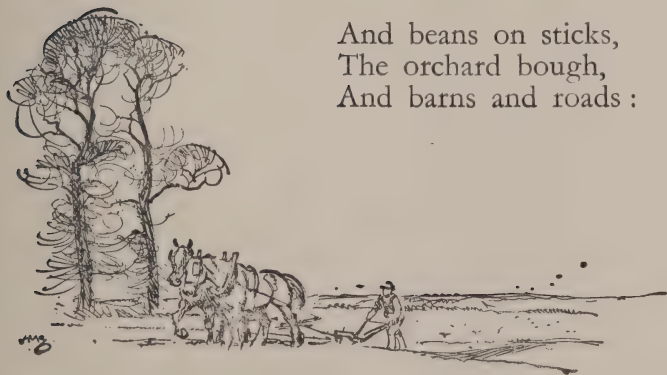


All these are mine,
And more by far
Than I can tell :

Primrose, bluebell,
The Evening Star,
And candleshine.

And wagon-loads,
And men at plough,
Rivers and ricks :

And beans on sticks,
The orchard bough,
And barns and roads :



The honey-bee,
The bumble kind,
And clouds at rest :

The bird, the nest—
All these I find
Are things of glee.



III PERSONS





BOBBY BLUE

Sometimes I have to cross the road
When some one isn't there
Except a man in uniform
Who takes a lot of care ;
I do not call him Officer
As other people do,
I thank him most politely,
And call him Bobby Blue.

He's very big, and every one
Does everything he tells,
The motor-cars with hooters
And the bicycles with bells ;
And even when I cross the road
With other people too,
I always say as I go by,
" Good-morning, Bobby Blue."





THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP

Mr. White, the Chimney-sweep,
When other people are asleep,
Gets up, and hastens to the place
Where he for gain must black his face.



Before the day becomes alight
You hear the steps of Mr. White,
Who forward puts his fleetest foot
To reach his paradise of soot.
He has a brush that is as high
As from the garden to the sky ;
He sees in every chimney-stack
Another promise for his sack.
Before the breakfast is upstairs
He spreads his sheets upon the chairs
And I can hear his brushes keep
The music of the chimney-sweep.
But when I'm dressed he's always gone.
And so I've never looked upon
The countenance of Mr. White
Who sweeps the chimneys in the night.





GARDENER

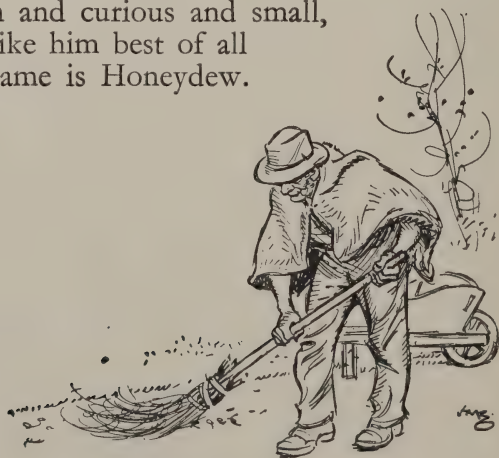
I like a man who mows the grass,
Because his name is Honeydew,
He walks with both his legs askew,
And keeps tomatoes in a glass.

He likes his bulbs and poppy-heads,
He ties his daffodils in knots,
He takes the pansies out of pots
And puts them in the garden beds.



He sweeps the gravel twice a week,
And if it rains he doesn't mind,
He is the rather busy kind
Who doesn't very often speak.

A nicer man I never knew,
He's brown and curious and small,
And yet I like him best of all
Because his name is Honeydew.





THE RAG-AND-BONE MAN

The Rag-and-Bone Man down our street
Sings as he goes upon his beat,
Collecting Rags and Bones and Things ;
The more he gets, the more he sings.

But even though his trade is bad
Enough to make a merchant sad,
He says there's nobody to blame,
And goes on singing just the same.



And if he's baked and boiling hot,
 Or, frozen black and blue, he's not,
 Still he sings in a very good way,
 "Any old Rags and Bones to-day?"





WANDA WILD

Now Wanda Wild was not a child
That I could recommend ;
She broke the rules at all her schools
Because they wouldn't bend ;
She told her Aunt I shall I shan't,
And pulled the puppies' tails,
She rang the bell and didn't tell,
And bit her finger nails.

She made a noise with several toys,
And if her mother said—
“Now Wanda, will you please be still,”
She made some more instead ;
She'd point and stare ; she didn't care ;
She trespassed in the wood ;
She poured the ink all down the sink ;
In fact, she wasn't good.

And sometimes if she took a tiff,
Although her nurse was charming,
She stamped the floor, she banged the door,
And carried on alarming ;
When told to wash she said “O bosh !”
And took the soap and threw it
And broke a glass, and bold as brass
Then said she didn't do it.



And, if you please, on days like these
She simply would not dress ;
Till stitch by stitch they made her, which
Displeased her none the less,
And then she'd shout " I won't go out,
Because I do not choose ;
I do declare I will not wear,
I *will* not wear my shoes."

So you'll agree I think with me
That little Wanda Wild
Was not at all what we should call
A satisfactory child.
But, just between ourselves I mean,
I'm willing to explain,
That you would look outside this book
For Wanda Wild in vain.





BUTTONS

At Belle Vue by the seaside,
A place which I enjoy,
He wears his bright brass buttons,
My pretty little Belle Vue Boy.

He stands on the steps at attenshun,
As I go on the Grand Parade,
And he swings the door for people,
As though it was why he was made.

They say that his name is Buttons,
And Buttons it well may be,
For his buttons they shine like
buttercups
At Belle Vue by the sca.



BIG SISTER

I like Big Sister very much indeed,
Who is almost twice as big as me,
Though I'm rather tired of hearing that every
one's agreed
That I am only half as big as she.



I like her being in a class that I'm a lot below,
And I like when Uncle gives her half a crown,
But I hate when people say, "Your sister's
growing up," as though
They also meant that I was growing down.

I know that she is fifteen years and I am only
eight,
And I know that she is cleverer than me,
But when in five years' time you find she's
twenty, at the rate
You're talking you will find that I am three.





THE WOODEN PIG

Barcelle of Barcelona
Did nothing very big.
He took a piece of wood or two
And made a wooden pig,
Whose colour it was yellow,
And the spots on him were blue,
And he wasn't like a person
They encourage at the Zoo.



And I bought him for a penny,
Which pleased him very well,
As he had been a-moping
Since parted from Barcelle ;
And now he isn't bothered
By anything at all,
For, though I call him Bacon,
His intelligence is small.

He's wooden in his manner,
And wooden in his wits,
And his tail is not exactly
The sort of tail that fits.
But though he has a figure
That isn't very good,
I shouldn't like him better
If he wasn't made of wood.



FOR A SMALL SPANISH FRIEND

A Confession and a Plea

A little Spanish, Natalie,
I cannot write, because at once
I may as well confess, you see,
In Spanish I'm a silly dunce.

Yet though I am afraid to show
What donkeys Englishmen can be,
I now at least can say I know
A little Spanish Natalie.





VANITY ANN

Vanity Ann
Admires herself
So much, that we
Can hardly call
It worth the while
Of any one else
To admire Miss Vanity
Ann at all.

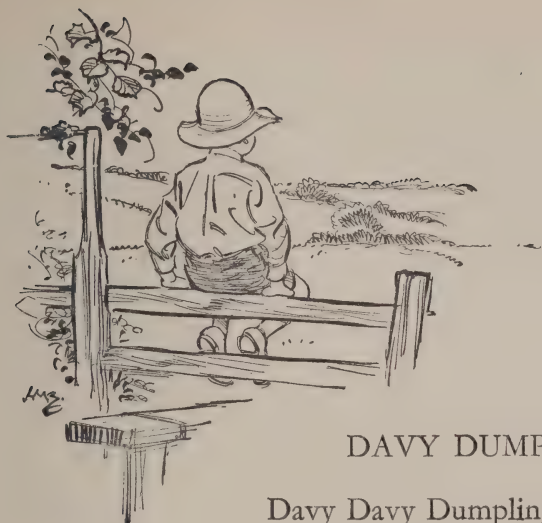


ELSIE

Elsie helps me how to dress,
She takes me, too, to school ;
If Elsie goes I cannot guess
Another person who'll
Be half so good at all the things
That Elsie does for me—
O welsie where are all my things ?
O welsie wait for me !

She knows the things I ought to wear,
If it is hot or cold ;
If what I want should not be there,
It is, when Elsie's told ;
She's always there to tell me why,
She's always there in time—
O welsie when ? O welsie why ?
O welsie what's the time ?





DAVY DUMPLING

Davy Davy Dumpling
 Sat upon a stile,
 Looked upon the landscape,
 Sang a little while ;
Sing a song of sixpence,

Davy Davy Dumpling
 Lost his butter-scotch,
 Found it in his pocket
 Where he kept his watch ;
A pocket full of rye,



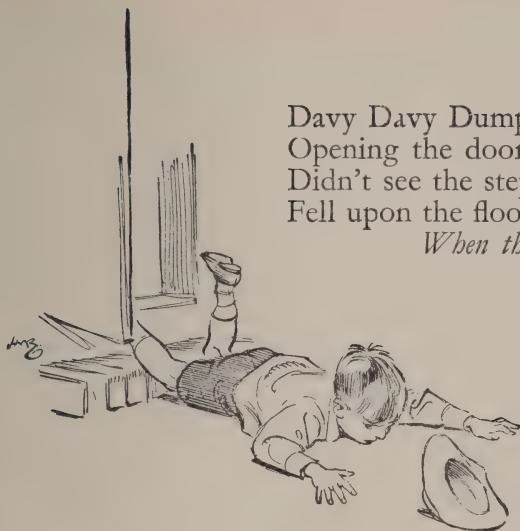
Davy Davy Dumpling
Whistled in the lane,
Where a billy blackbird
Whistled back again ;
Four-and-twenty blackbirds,



Davy Davy Dumpling
Thought he'd like a bun,
But he found the baker
Hadn't even one ;
Baked in a pie ;



Davy Davy Dumpling,
Opening the door,
Didn't see the step there,
Fell upon the floor ;
When the pie was opened,



Davy Davy Dumpling,
Went to scare the birds,
Found that he'd forgotten
All the proper words ;
The birds began to sing ;





Davy Davy Dumpling
 Carried porridge bowls
 Full of steaming porridge
 To the Vicar of All Souls ;
Wasn't that a dainty dish

Davy Davy Dumpling
 Hadn't anything
 He considered worthy
To set before a King.





THE GIPSY

I saw a Gipsy in the lane.
 It's quite understood
 That I never should
 Play with the gipsies in the wood—
Nevertheless,
I must confess,
That I did see a Gipsy in the lane.



She smoked a little clay pipe and all,
And she wore a scarlet and yellow shawl,
And her hair was black as a blackbird's wing,
And her arms were brown, and she did sing—

*My Gipsy boy's the fellow
For the scarlet and the yellow,
But he's a bonny fighter
In the mountains far away;
So I'm walking till I find him,
To take him and to bind him
With my tresses that are brighter
Than the blackbird's wing in May.*

Then she smoked her black little pipe again,
And walked along, walked along down the lane,
And she might have been a Queen of Sheba or
Spain.

Then she came right by the place where I stood—
But I never should

Play with the gipsies in the wood—
And she stopped, and was going to speak—but
I turned

And ran, because I have always learned
That I never should

Play with the gipsies in the wood—
Though if I had listened to what she was saying
It could hardly be said that that was playing,
And it wasn't a wood, but only a lane.



So I ran for a bit, then I turned again,
 To see if she was waiting, but she was gone,
 The scarlet and yellow that she had on,
 The blackbird tresses and pipe of clay,
 And the walk of her walking like Queen Cathay,
 To her fighter in the mountains and far away.

I don't complain
 That I never should—
 It's quite understood—
 But *I did see a Gipsy in the lane.*



IV
THE FOUR TOWERS
An Adventure





THE FOUR TOWERS

An Adventure

I

Little Sally Sopkins,
One summer morning,
Went off a-walking
Down a green lane,
Nobody saw her
Go down the garden path,
Open the garden gate,
And shut it again.



Down the lane she wandered,
Where the birds were singing
In the flowery hedges,
She wandered for a mile ;
She saw a little rabbit,
She heard a cuckoo calling,
She smelt the honeysuckle,
And she came to a stile.

She looked, and she wondered
Where it was the way to,
How long it took to get there,
And whether it was far ;
One step, and two steps
Up, and she found herself
With one leg and two legs
Over the bar.



Over the *top* bar of all,
And then down again,
Into a meadow
Of deep, deep grass ;
And a path that went winding
Through the yellow buttercups,
Seemed to be ready
For someone to pass.

So someone, which was Sally,
Went far across the meadow,
And more stiles to follow,
And many meadows more ;
And she sometimes ran a little,
Where the red cows were feeding,
And she heard the larks a-singing
As they never sang before.



O sweet the summer morning,
On the hay and cattle breathing,
On the birds and beasties busy
In the woods and round about;
And it seemed to Sally somehow
That somewhere there was hiding
A very great adventure,
If she could find it out.

She passed a little house where
Of smoke a little ribbon
Came from a little chimney for
A little wind to blow;
And it floated out before her,
Very slowly, very surely,
As though it meant to tell her
The proper way to go.



So follow, Sally, follow ;
And she followed it, forgetting
The time it was, the way it was,
And O the world so wide ;
The sun was saying twelve o'clock,
When through a wood of willows
She found her way was ended
Upon a riverside.



II

Never so still was
River beholden,
Fast flowing river,
Yet still as the night ;
Sunny and silver,
Crystal its water,
A river of silence,
A river of light.

High woods beyond it,
With rooks wheeling over,
Blue flags and yellow,
Lilies afloat ;
But wonder of wonders
That lay on that river,
Enchanted, in beauty,
Was drifting a boat.

It was painted as coral,
Its mast was as primrose,
Its one sail was drooping,
Its one sail was blue ;
Its oars were of gold,
And the rower was lovely,
A Lady, a story
For Sally come true.



She stayed in her rowing,
She turned her sweet face to
Where Sally was standing,
And sweetly she smiled ;
On the brink of the river,
The brink of adventure,
Stood small Sally Sopkins,
A wondering child.

“ Where are you going to,
My pretty Lady ?
Can I come with you
And row with an oar ? ”
The beautiful Lady
Made no word of answer,
But gravely and gently
She pulled to the shore.



“ Step in, and come rowing,
I have fine things to show you,
Be my friend on the river,
Little maid, little maid.”
And Sally, unfearing,
Went down to the water,
“ I will come, pretty Lady,
And not be afraid.”



III

The little wind grew greater,
And in the blue sail swelling
It carried them so lightly
Along the river's breast,
And the dragon-flies were skimming,
And the silver trout were rising,
And the water-hens were playing
About their reedy nest.

On and on they glided,
And the oars were never needed,
And the pretty Lady spoke not,
But O, the happy hour,
For she, so sweetly smiling,
Was lovely on the river,
And they sailed along together
Till they came upon a tower.



It rose from out the rushes,
High above the meadows,
“We will climb it,” said the Lady,
“To see what we shall see;”
And she moored the boat, and swiftly
The steps of stone she mounted,
And Sally followed after,
To see what she could see.



To the top they came, and under
Lay all the cows and steeples,
The meadows and the orchards
That Sally Sopkins knew.
“Enough,” the pretty Lady said,
“For we have far to travel,”
And once again the blowing wind
Was in their sail of blue.



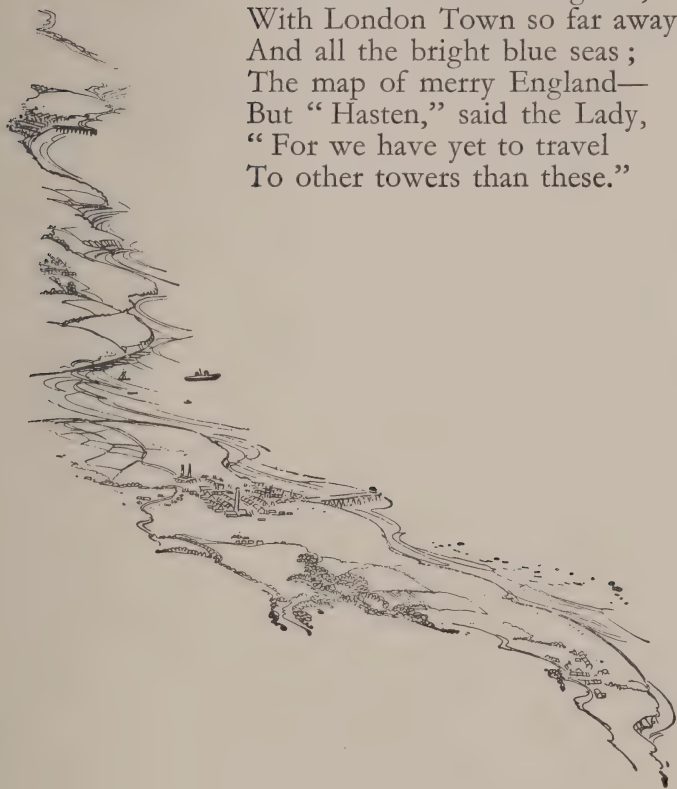
Again along the river,
Where water-voles were preening
Their whiskers on the lily-pads
They took the flowing tide,
Till, where the river widened
To shores of sandy yellow,
They came upon a second tower
Upon the river side.



It rose from out the shingle,
Higher than mounts the skylark,
“We will climb it,” said the Lady,
“To see what we shall see ;”
And again her fleeter footsteps
Rang on the winding stairway,
And Sally followed after,
To see what she could see.



And there spread out below them,
Was all the land of England,
With London Town so far away,
And all the bright blue seas ;
The map of merry England—
But "Hasten," said the Lady,
"For we have yet to travel
To other towers than these."



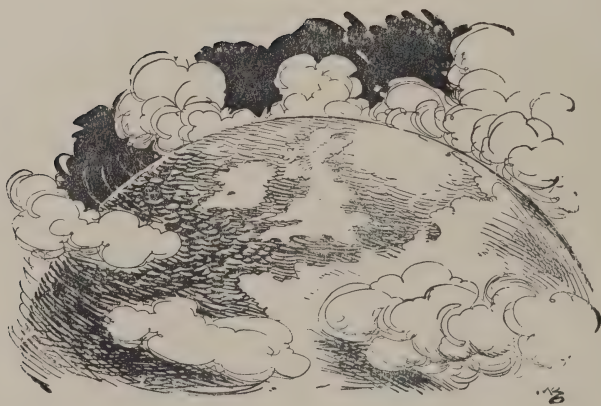
The twilight now was falling
As down the darkening river
Between the glooming woods they went
Upon their winding way ;
The bats were flickering through the dusk,
As far above the tree-tops
They saw the third tower shadowed
Upon the fading day.





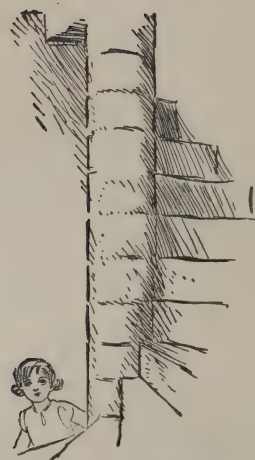
It rose from out the pine-woods,
Beyond all cloudy spaces,
"We will climb it," said the Lady,
"To see what we shall see ;"
And up and up untiring
She dwindled in the distance,
And Sally followed after,
To see what she could see.

And down and down for ever
As far as eye could fathom
They saw the whole earth turning
From pole to pole in time ;
And Sally stared astonished
To see the great globe spinning,
But "Onward," said the Lady,
"There is yet a tower to climb."



And now the boat was steering
In the dark upon the waters,
And the passing shores were hidden
As midnight came in June ;
And they heard the sea-waves moving
As the fourth tower rose before them,
Its huge top turrets leaning
Upon the crescent moon.





It rose from out the billows
Where the river met the ocean,
“We will climb it,” said the Lady,
“To see what we shall see;”
And to the height of heaven
She led the last adventure,
And Sally followed after,
To see what she could see.



And there above, below them,
On every side were shining
In sprays and streams and clusters
The stars that are so bright ;
“ O tell me, pretty Lady,
Where is the earth I live on ? ”
The Lady said, “ It shines there,
A star upon the night.”

Then little Sally Sopkins,
She said "O pretty Lady,
I promised not to be afraid,
But please I'd like to go
Again to see the garden,
And the fields about my playhouse,
And all the other places
That I live in down below."

IV

At Sally's home, her mother,
And all her best relations,
And all the other people
Were in a dreadful state ;
All day long and all night long
They had gone on looking, looking,
When some one said, "There's some one
Outside the garden gate."

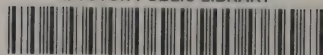
And little Sally Sopkins
Was home, O dear, O deary dear,
And how it all had happened
She never could explain.
She said a pretty Lady
Had shown her all the wonders,
But nothing, nothing, nothing
Would make her go again.



“ Because you never know, you see,”
She said, “ what time of day it is,
Or what’s the way to anywhere
When you’re in wonderland,
But here at home I’ve things to do,
And meals to eat, and games to play,
And people to go walking with
That I can understand.”



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